

THE  
EXPOSITOR  
AND HOMILETIC REVIEW



JOURNAL OF PRACTICAL CHURCH METHODS



ADVENT  
Make Straight The Way of the Lord.

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# Vol. LVII      No. 11

## C O N T E N T S

# The EXPOSITOR

and The HOMILETIC REVIEW

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### DIVISIVE ZEAL

A large segment of the American public has been deprived of an adequate ministry because of denominational competition among Protestant churches, a noted church official said Wednesday night.

Dr. Stanley U. North of New York told 3000 delegates attending the Seventh National Assembly of United Church Women that in too many instances denominational conduct has been "on the level of competing chain stores and gas stations." He is General Secretary of the Division of Church Extension & Evangelism of the Congregational Christian Churches.

Dr. North said hundreds of rural communities are "over-churched" through the sectarian zeal on the part of one or another of the denominations. He warned that the results of the sectarian competition "are quite often chaotic and not infrequently tragic."

He said he knew of several instances where there were five or six churches in a rural community with a population hardly large enough to support one.

"It is because of a third-rate loyalty that across rural America hundreds of communities are denied adequacy of church plant, competency of leadership and richness of program," he continued.

"Protestantism has no business so to segmentize a community as to rob it of adequate church life. The very purpose we claim to serve we defeat by our divisiveness."

The situation is particularly tragic in cities, Dr. North said. "As they grow in size and neighborhoods give way to commerce and industry and slum sections develop, the need for the church is not less but greater." (P)

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# WE GIVE THANKS

HUGO R. PRUTER

ON Thanksgiving Day, it is good to look back upon the first celebration of this event at Plymouth Colony 1621.

One of the things we need to do is to understand the principle reasons for which our Pilgrim Fathers gave thanks. They had left their homes in England after a brief sojourn in Holland, had come to the decision to strike out across the sea and there establish a new home in the wilderness, in order that they might practice their faith.

They of course, sought other things that men need and seek; the chance to earn a livelihood and to provide themselves homes in congenial surroundings. And in the wilderness they hoped to find that kind of opportunity.

There were even a few among them, a small minority to be sure, who came primarily to better their economic lot. The great majority of the Pilgrims had found work and homes in Holland, and by every standard they were getting along. And yet, there were a few things that disturbed their minds very much.

They had left their homes in England under persecution and had gone to Holland in mind, that they might practice their faith. But there were things about that faith that made it difficult to survive in an alien culture.

First, it demanded of them and their children, a more intimate, a closer relationship in the Church than had ever been enjoyed in Christian history since apostolic times. Their children were growing up in a different culture than theirs. In fact they, themselves, were not worshipping with the people with whom they worked and associated day by day. It was important in the Separatist Church at Leyden, that the members were all things together. They were not content simply to worship in fellowship; they felt they must work and play in

a Christian community.

If at times it seemed that the churches of New England were overly concerned with the community, it must be remembered that they brought with them a belief to the effect that there is no such thing as a solitary Christian. They sought a place where they might not only worship in Christian community but where their church order might be established in every sphere of life.

They felt that they had an opportunity in a new land to establish that kind of a community, that kind of society in which a complete church life would be possible. Having caught this vision of what would be possible across the sea, they felt it must be God's will and command, that they should set sail and work for the establishment of Christ's church.

So, in the year 1620, they crossed the ocean and in the midst of winter, began a Holy Experiment. It was called that, because they knew they could frustrate and defeat God's purpose if they failed in their obedience to Him and His commands. They had no way of knowing what their strength might be or whether their faith was deep enough to complete the task God required of them.

The land which they were given for this experiment was bleak and barren, and by every standard inhospitable for a new settlement. After one year, the very fact that they survived was reason enough for thanksgiving.

That year of survival not only meant they would have food enough and shelter to continue, but it meant for certain that they would be able to accomplish that which they felt God demanded of them.

Without question they would be able to establish once again, the Church under the direct and sole control of their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Here is the issue which we must keep in mind. The Pilgrims on that first

Thanksgiving Day, were giving thanks, not because they had received a bountiful harvest, primarily, but that God's will would be realized, and be permitted to operate. They gave thanks that they, themselves, had not frustrated what was the will and purpose of their God. Their coming to America was not of their own choosing; their coming was not something they had capriciously decided to do; their coming was motivated by their conviction that God willed it so. Their labor, their sacrifices were solely that the will of God might be made manifest through them, in a wilderness country.

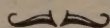
Our services of Thanksgiving are good and they are necessary. It is good that we give thanks for the food we receive. It is good that we thank God for all the material blessings of the past year. But if we are going to have the true spirit of Thanksgiving, it is essential, first of all that we have some conviction in our lives, some conviction which drives us to seek out in the revealed and written Word of God, His will for us.

We must have a conviction that God has a plan which He wills for us, a certain way of life, a certain path. We must

seek to make that will and that plan reality in our lives. And, lastly, must remember to give thanks when the will is fulfilled by our obedience to Him. So, when you gather around your table on Thanksgiving Day, thank Him, not only for the things that you have received, the many abundant blessings which He has given you, but thank Him that you have been enabled by the strength of His love to give you to carry out and fulfill His will in your life.

If you fall short of that, if you have not thought in terms of God's plan for you, then, at your Thanksgiving service, resolve that in the coming year, you will seek to know what it is that God has in store for you, and then seek to carry that out to the letter, for then your Thanksgiving next year will be truly joyous. Then and only then will you know that God who created you for a purpose, has seen that purpose fulfilled in all that you do and say, and are.

For we give thanks, not only for what we have received, not only for what we have accomplished, but more especially for what God has accomplished in and through us.



## GET READY for CHURCH

JAMES D. JENKINS

"GET ready for church!" That expression is heard every Sunday morning in the homes of people who are in the habit of going to church. Usually our preparation for church means merely to don our best clothes, shine our shoes, put on a new coating of cosmetics and the like. And how happy we are when we have something new to wear to church!

Much time is spent and great energy is exerted in order to be ready for church. However, we are not ready for church if we spend all of our time and effort on our outward appearance. Too often we think more of getting ready to go into the presence of other people, than we do of being ready to go into the presence

of God. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus speaks of the hypocrites: "For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." The only reward some people ever seek in going to church is to hear people rave over their clothes, or hats or hair-do. I know of at least one person who even misses that reward and the Worship Service with a total loss as far as she was concerned.

What would happen in the House of the Lord on Sunday, if people would spend only half of the time in preparing their hearts and minds as they do their outward appearance? Such a spiritual atmo-

where would be created that sinners would cry out, What must I do to be saved? The saints would shout for joy, and the minister would preach with a new power. If people would really get ready for church, Christianity would make the front page, and the world would take knowledge that we had been with Jesus. God has never failed to bless the people who were ready to receive His blessings. We often go to church poor and needy creatures and come away in the same state, not because God was not ready to bless us, but because we were not ready to receive. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."

Micah asked the question, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sins of my soul?" The Psalmist answers that question when he says: "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

The Scriptures make it perfectly clear that he cannot be a true worshiper who is a voluntary and unrepentant breaker of the commandments of God. God can not accept the worship of an unrepentant sinner. Outward sacrifice will not do. Worship can not be outward unless it is really inward. The only preparation for church that really prepares one to come before the Lord, is the cleansing of the heart. If man "regard iniquity in his heart" the Lord will not hear him. No wonder our church services are so often meaningless and ineffective. We bring into His holy presence that which is most repugnant to Him. Therefore:

*In vain we tune our formal songs,  
In vain we strive to rise;  
Hosannas languish on our tongues,  
And our devotion dies.*

Before we are ready for church we must be properly related to our brethren. Again, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus

says: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee: leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Surely, one is not ready for church if there is anything between him and his brother. Some differences, of course, can not be adjusted because some men will not forgive. However, a sincere effort can be made for reconciliation. The spirit of worship is ruined when hearts are not sweet.

"Many churches are made up of people who do not know one another, and who do not want to know one another. Too many village churches are composed of people who do know one another and are sorry they do." Are you sorry that you know the people in your church? Then remember that they also know you.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity." Before one is ready for church he must have clean hands. It is vain to talk of inward experiences unless the daily life is free from impurity, dishonesty, violence and oppression. The people who draw near to God must have clean hands. What monarch would have servants with filthy hands to wait at his table? If our hands are unclean, let us wash them in the precious Blood, and so let us pray unto God, lifting up pure hands.

"And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes." The Jews often prayed with up-lifted hands, but the hands were so stained with sin that God hid His eyes from them and would not hear their prayer. Are you ready for church? Look at your hands! Are they soiled with a business that is unclean? Have your hands taken that which is not yours? Do your hands show the marks of hard work done for the Master, or are they soft and puffy from idleness? It is well to remember that our hands can be "full of blood" because of neglect just as they can be stained by

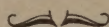
deliberate transgression.

Are you ready for church? Look at your heart! True religion is heart work. We may cleanse the body and put on our Sunday clothes, but with unwashed hearts we are unclean in the sight of God. Spurgeon once said, "We may lose our hands and yet live, but we could not lose our hearts and still live. There must be a work of grace in the core of the heart as well as in the palm of the hand, or our religion is a delusion." The pure in heart are the ones who behold the beauty of God; all others are blind to Him. The heart is the symbol of the mind -- "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The curse of this modern day of ours is evil thinking. We have toyed with impure thoughts until the foundation of character lies crumbled under our feet. No nation can live above its thought-life. No dirty mind can produce a clean life.

Are you ready for church? Look to your attitudes! "Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity." In the parable of the Pharisee and publican, we can see reflected the attitude of many as they enter the church to pray. The Pharisee enters with the feeling that the entire congregation should welcome his coming and of course the Lord should be honored by his presence. Taking a conspicuous place he says: "God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all I possess." While some men do not use these exact words, their attitudes are the same. They admit that they "do some things that are wrong," yet they do not do some things that others do. They attend church, "pay their part," and justify themselves while they admit that they are not pure within. If there is a known wrong in a man's life which he refuses to give up, he can never be ready for church until he humbles himself, deals with his sin, and prays with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Humility is a rare virtue. The test of a truly great man is humility. "Stoop," said an old man as with a youth he passed along a tunnel with low beams overhead. "Stoop! Stoop! You are a young man and have the world before you. Stoop as you go through it and you will

miss many hard bumps." Those who would ascend to God must first descend in humility.

Having made all outward preparation for church and before entering the sanctuary, pray, "Create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Before going to church next Sunday spend just ten minutes immediately before leaving home going over in your mind the kind of life you have lived during the week, looking for and being willing to recognize your failures and shortcomings. This will certainly help you in getting ready for church and will make the service more meaningful.



### The CHALLENGING CROSS

The traveler in London goes, inevitably to St. Paul's. Its glorious dome looms over London like a sheltering rock. On the dome is the Cross which is ever challenging the splendor and the miseries of the city-dwellers. It is the sign that victory will come over the material dangers and disasters of modern life.

The cross must be personalized to each individual life. It is righteousness in terms of personal denial and sacrifice which will cleanse the city. It is mercy and sympathy in terms of personal service which will relieve it. It is not enough to denounce the sins of a city. One must help those who are mastered by them to win a victory over sin and depravity. The surveys which we make of our cities, miseries, dangers, buildings and population, will get us nowhere unless men and women in the spirit of Christ, are ministering in His name. The cross of our churches must be the symbol of the cross in our hearts. The cross of Christ is not only a challenge to the godless and a comfort to the sorrowing; it is forever a summons to those who bear the Lord's name and express their purpose to follow His way along the path of life.

E. B. ALL

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*Trouble is a sieve through which we sift our acquaintances. Those who are too big to pass through are friends.*

# The Editor's Columns



## THE LESSER CUP

AS I recall, it was in the depot in Boston. I had stepped into the cafe at midnight for a wee snack before being on my way home from a lecture date. Ahead of me, in line, were a couple of lads in their late teens, whose capacity made me envious for their trays were heaped high.

As an after-thought the one immediately ahead of me asked for a glass of orange juice. The white-clad attendant behind the counter inserted a pointed paper cup in a bright metal container, then filled it up with the tempting, golden fluid. Placing it on the boy's tray he barked, "That's twenty-five cents." The lad stood silently, perplexed. What was wrong? I sensed it was the price of the juice. It was, for shortly he said, "Two bits? You charged me fifteen cents last night."

Then followed a one-sided and rather rugged dissertation based on the fact that a customer has the option between a larger or a smaller serving, and in that the boy had specified neither the large or the small, he had been served the large cup, the cost of which troubled him.

The attendant handled him with unnecessary gruffness, to the point where I felt my sympathies swinging wholly to the youth in his little passing problem. He could have saved himself had he specified the size of serving when he placed his order. But then, did the attendant have no responsibility in the matter? He had not inquired what size up the boy wished. He may not even have known that there were available two different sized cups. The attendant assuredly did. The misunderstanding could have been avoided had he inquired when the youth gave his order, as to the size of the serving desired. But

he had not and stood there defiantly belligerent as though his honesty and integrity, to say nothing of intelligence, had been challenged. Finally, not to lose the sale entirely, he solved the boy's problem in a manner typical of depot cafe exigencies. He did it by taking a smaller paper cup, placing it in another metal container, and then he filled it by pouring a portion of the larger cup of orange juice into it. Having done that and put the small cup on the boy's tray, he deliberately poured what was left in the larger cup down the drain and crumpling the paper cup in his hand, tossed it into the waste-box, the while mumbling incoherently under his breath. Waste would be the normal solution for him.

It was a little thing, in the great, overall scheme of things, yet like so many little things, it was lush with thought-stabbing truths.

While the character behind the counter was not scaled to inspire, and certainly bore slight resemblance to a ministerial one, it was not greatly dissimilar from that pastor's who, knowing full well of both the larger and the smaller spiritual cups, fills the lesser cup with the juice of the fruits of over-management, over-organization, social activities and the like and pours the spiritual contents of the larger cup, down the drain, the while his parishioners thirst for large servings of the spiritual drink of life.

## LIVING WITH PEACE OF MIND

PROFESSED Christians now constitute a higher proportion of the total population of the United States than in any previous decade in our history.

Yet, materialism and secularism are everywhere rampant. It seems that a  
(See page 392)

# THE CHURCH *at* WORK



## CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Concordia Publishing House has issued two new and delightfully effective services for the Children's Christmas. They are well printed in attractive covers having full colored manger scenes upon them and are complete even to full four-part settings for the Christmas hymns in each. They are titled *Our Wonderful Redeemer* and *In Bethlehem's Manger*, the latter being accompanied by an appropriate film-strip of the Christmas story. The price is seven cents each, seventy two cents per dozen, or five dollars, per one hundred. The use of these programs must insure a dignified and substantial Christmas program for your children. Write the Concordia Publication House, 3558 South Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, Mo.

## THE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Candles are naturally associated with Christmas festivities, and church candlelight services may be carried out most effectively, where desired. There are a number of ways for introducing candles into the service, but whatever method is employed, care should be exercised that the open flame come in contact with no inflammable matter.

**First Method.** You may have your candles placed in a form the shape of a cross or crown on the chancel platform. At an appointed time in the service, before the Scripture lesson, or wherever desired, someone may light the candles, a little girl dressed for the part, a boy to represent his group, a young woman or the head of some church organization.

**Second Method.** You may select someone to appear on the rostrum, bearing a lighted candle, just before the lesson

reading. After the reading, boys and girls who were previously selected and supplied with candles, may leave their places in the pews and proceed to the rostrum to light their individual candles. They may go one at a time or march in pairs. After the candles have been lighted, those holding them should return to their seats. This might be done to the accompaniment of instrumental music or the singing of a suitable hymn by the congregation. When all the candles have been lit, there should be one for each class or class division of the Sunday School. The children may rise and form a line for a procession through the aisles. When the children resume their seats, the candles should be extinguished and placed in safe receptacles.

**Third Method.** The announcement of the service may be printed and mailed well in advance, so that parents will know at the Sunday School pupils will be permitted to hold lighted candles during a specified time in the service, provided they are accompanied by their parents. The audience will be seated just as for any usual service, only the parents will sit with their children. At a signal from the pastor, two boys trained for this part of the service will proceed to the chancel and light their candles at the one large lighted candle near the pulpit or lectern. After lighting their candles, they will proceed to the edge of the chancel, one standing at each side. Ten or twelve boys who have been trained and seated in the rear of the church will go to the chancel with their candles. Those on the right go to the right side of the chancel and those on the left to the left. Each boy will light his candle as he approaches the boy with the candle who is standing at the edge of the chancel. Now the

proceed to the aisles, where the lighted candles are passed down the length of pews, in the same manner as the offering plates are passed from pew to pew. The boys stand at the ends of the pews as candles are passed. After all the children in the pews have lighted their candles, the boys pass again to the chancel where the candles are placed in sockets prepared for them around the large master candle. The two boys who have been waiting on the chancel platform place their candles in the sockets with the others and return down the aisle with the other boys. The candles on the platform will burn throughout the service. Those in the hands of the children in the pews will be extinguished at a signal given by the pastor, when that part of the service is over.

### CHRISTMAS SUGGESTION

. Luke 2:1-14.

Christmas Miracle.

Christmas Message

Christmas Music

. Luke 2:15.

Prophecy - *This which the Lord hath made known.*

Fulfillment - *The thing which is come to pass.*

Appropriation - *Let us now go even unto Bethlehem.*

### INTERESTING SIDELIGHTS

From a study made by Dr. Beson Y. Landis, a New York church research specialist, came some interesting sidelights.

They indicate that the average church member contributes 34 cents a week.

That 90% of the country's 97,000,000 church members belong to 19 larger denominations.

That dozens of new church offices have lately sprung up in Washington to give church bodies both an ear and a voice in national affairs touching on religious principle.

That the size of American denominations range from 16,000 churches and 2,500,000 members to 2 churches and 25 members.

That 84% of the college and university students professes a belief in God. The

freshmen are more inclined to feel that God influences their daily conduct than seniors, and women more than men.

That in rural communities ministers' salaries run around \$2000 to \$2500 while in urban communities that average is around \$4000.

One out of five congregations does not own its own place of worship.

That the average seating capacity in church auditoriums is 300 which is the size of the average church membership.

That beginning in 1947 there has been a steady and marked increase in Sunday school membership.

And probably best of all, that there is a fine trend toward greater co-operation between denominations, "a more adequate expression of unity of spirit."

### SOMETHING NEW

During the year you will be in the market for special cakes, pies, rolls, cookies, bread and candies. Several members of our Women's Society are willing to fill your orders.

The profits will be given to the Greater St. John's Fund. If you are willing to help out either by orders or by your services, please notify Mrs. Blank.

### DAWNING OF A NEW DAY AND A NEW YEAR

I am the casual observer, away from home, on New Year's Eve, who dropped into a local church in hope of finding the needed "lift" for the coming day, New Year's Day!

Of course, I expected the usual service, but behold! This night was different. The whole atmosphere of the usual service was changed. Lights were concealed with paper shades decorated with old Hebrew characters. The semi-darkness caused me to wonder and hesitate. The usher took me to a seat in the front of the church, and when my eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, I knew that the church was completely filled with worshippers.

A blue light dawned slowly over the organ, and soon the rich tones of the prelude muted the hum of appreciation that swept over the congregation. The whole choir area was filled with a blue light, as of the early dawning of day. The music changed. "Now the Night is Over, Day is Drawing Nigh," enveloped the whole group of worshippers, as the robed choir moved up the aisle and to their seats. Yes, they were robed, but not as usual; they had strange head-dresses and decorations. The program said they were the chorus of

priests entering the temple.

The song ceased; the singers remained standing. From the rear of the church came the opening measures of "The Lord Is In His Holy Temple." The voice drew nearer, as one came down the aisle wearing a mitre, a robe and breastplate, and in his hand he carried a lighted censer. As the sacred song was finished, he stood on the platform.

During the singing of the sacred songs a lighted moon and stars glowed over the heads of the choir. Reverently, the person on the platform raised his hands and offered a prayer, a simple prayer, filled with praise and petition, calling upon God to search the heart and mind of each individual worshipper.

With the others, I sat down feeling that I wished to know more about my obligations to the loving God who brought us here, and who would one day welcome us into another world. The high priest had turned away and a brilliant, blue spotlight followed him to the side of the chancel. He put down his burning censer and reclined upon a place made ready for him there.

At the opposite side of the platform, a floodlight revealed a Hebrew boy, also reclining. The minister came to his desk and read the famous story of Samuel and Eli. At the proper time, the child crossed the platform and in pantomime was enacted the drama closing with the famous words, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth!"

Just as the minister completed his reading, the lights on the little drama faded away, leaving the picture of little Samuel kneeling in prayer, on our minds. There was a setting into which a beautiful sermon was placed. In simple words, the speaker told how God revealed Himself in many ways to man and personally called them to do His work; how men in all ages had answered that call. He spoke of the rewards to those called. He presented the need today for men who will unflinchingly follow the Call to do His work. He emphasized that in the sunshine of day, man seldom hears God, but in the shadows of the night and the dawning day, God often speaks to us, and we can hear Him during those hours, because the noise and glitter of the world is crowded out of our consciousness for the time.

I did not hear the rest of the sermon; I did not even see the speaker, because "out of the dim light and absence of confusion" came the thought of my own home, my loved ones, especially those called to another life, my own personal need for God's love and understanding. Then came the unanswerable realization that above and beyond God's love, I personally needed the commission open to all those who accept and believe in Him, that is to go forth among others and and help them to see and understand the meaning of life.

From the dreamland of hopes, besetting all humans during the anxious hours of the day, I was given the grace to realize that here I stood in the presence of God's spokesman, and I, too, could pray,

"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

In minutes, the blue lights changed to white. The closing hymn was half sung, he whispered to its end. I cannot speak for a but I know one man withdrew from that service reluctantly, and left that church on New Year's dawning, determined to heed and follow that Call.

L. L. Chamne:

A fifty page booklet, PARENT GUIDANCE series 4, Concordia Publishing House, 3558 So. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, 18, Mo., 30¢ a copy, contains eight topics for parents of high school-aged youths, emphasizing "Things Parents can do to Help Teen-agers."

## THE MODERN TREND?

Dear Editor,

Clergymen may not realize just what is going on in the mind of the layman today especially the young people. . . . If we could plot a chart of the modern trend in religion we would see that the scientific curve would go up and up, while the traditional ideas would go down and down. This may be unfortunate, but it is a picture of the state of the human mind today. It is almost impossible to reverse a trend, even such a minor trend as of women smoking cigarettes. One woman asked me recently if I objected to women smoking. I said that I did. But she asked "What are you going to do about it?" I said, "I can do very little except talk about it." At that she took out a cigarette, lit it and began to smoke, and said she would smoke anyway. So, also, the trends in religion will go on in spite of all we can do.

R.L.Roberts.

## PENNIES AND QUARTERS

Perhaps this sounds unbelievable, but we have proof in the money already on hand. The choir has received 31,266 pennies and the pastor has received 1650 quarters. This fund has come from willing givers who are joining in the fun of collecting one million pennies and one million quarters. Yes, it CAN be done and when you remember that every cent given in this way goes to the new church fund, it makes it altogether worthwhile. (The total will amount to over \$250,000. The church working the plan has some 1,300 confirmed members)

## THE CHURCH FUND-RAISING COLUMN

By Norman E. Nygaard, D.D.

*Dr. Nygaard is a Presbyterian minister who has contributed regularly to The Expositor for more than thirty years. For the last six years he has given full time to writing and professional fund-raising for churches.*

**QUESTION:** Would you care to comment on the matter of fund-raising for women's groups? Our pastor is very much opposed to bazaars or any type of fund-raising activity whatever, including the sale of Christmas cards, magazine subscriptions, etc.

He feels that we should not "raise" money for our society even though some of it will be given to the church, but that our members should all give generously to the support of the church.

**ANSWER:** The question has some theological implications, of course, and this column is basically concerned with methods. However, for what our opinion is worth, we are willing to comment.

First of all, it is fairly evident to everyone, I believe, that the church is basically concerned with the principles of stewardship. People should be taught to GIVE — not to "raise" money by devious methods.

Secondly, there are some very obnoxious methods which some church groups have used to raise money. How any church can call itself Christian and yet employ these methods is difficult to understand. Among them, of course, are Bingo, raffles, and any type of fund-raising scheme which depends basically on the element of chance or gambling. A great many states, by law, forbid such fund-raising schemes, but churches occasionally wink at the law, and sometimes the law makes exception in favor of a church or charitable institution. To hide behind such an exception in order to do something which is inherently wrong, puts the church in a very bad light.

Thirdly, merely from the standpoint of good public relations, it is unwise for a church to sell articles which put it into competition with local merchants. The sale of vanilla-extract, the ordinary commercial variety of Christmas cards, various types of kitchenware, etc., bring the church into direct competition with various business men in the community. Yet the church pays nothing for overhead and even its sales are generally tax exempt. This is certainly unfair competi-

tion.

Having disposed of the unfavorable aspects of "raising" money there are some things to be said in favor of certain types of money-raising activities for various church groups. In the first place, it should be understood that every one should give to the Lord. Money-raising should never take the place of giving. However, there are some people on low bracket incomes who find it impossible to give as much as they would desire. Some of these are aged people on pensions. Older women in this category find that they can use their hands to advantage to sew or knit or crochet for the Lord. Their best outlet for the sale of their products is a bazaar. There are young people's groups, particularly groups of teen-agers who actually learn to be of service to the church through some group fund-raising activity. I know, for instance, of one group of young people who contracted to wash the cars on a used car lot for the building fund of their church. They devoted their Saturdays to this project. To my mind it is altogether dogmatic to refuse younger or older people the opportunity to raise money in a group and insist that money which is given to the church must be earned individually.

There are lovely Christmas cards which are made up of pictures of individual churches and which have thoroughly Christian Christmas greetings within their pages. The sale of such cards to church members, it would seem to me, would not be at all repugnant to the Christian spirit.

We would suggest, in conclusion, that every fund-raising activity of a church or any of its organizations should be carefully scrutinized in the light of the church's function and of the Christian spirit.

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# The Pulpit

+++

## Walking With God

JOHN H. JOHANSEN



*Text: Phil. 2:5 - Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus.*

**W**HEN an eminent Congregational clergyman was asked what his church had done for hymnology, he replied that he was "willing to rest its reputation on four hymns, not to mention more, namely: Timothy Dwight's *I love Thy Kingdom, Lord*, Ray Palmer's *My Faith looks up to Thee*, Leonard Bacon's *O God, beneath Thy guiding hand*, and Washington Gladden's *O Master, let me walk with Thee*.

Surely that is a great group of hymns, nor is the last the least important. Our interest for the moment lies in it.

Washington Gladden's creed is best expressed in his own words as set forth in his *Recollections* written in 1909:

*Because the Christian life is the noblest life; because it is more blessed to give than to receive, and better to minister than to be ministered unto; because the good of life is not found in separating yourself from your fellows, but by identifying yourself with them - therefore let us be Christians. If the Church would dare to preach and practice the things which Jesus Christ commanded, she would soon regain her lost power.*

This hymn, *O Master, let me walk with*

*Thee*, was written in 1879 for the magazine *SUNDAY AFTERNOON*, of which the author was the editor. He had no thought that it would ever be used as a hymn, but when it became popular he requested that it should be sung to the tune, *Maryton*, composed in 1874 by H. Percy Smith. How often great hymns are spoiled by putting them to unfamiliar settings:

The first thing to notice about this hymn is the use of the word "path."

*O Master, let me walk with Thee  
In lowly paths of service free.*

Now a path is a track worn by foot travel. It is a more or less unfrequented trail up a mountain, or a walk through a garden, or along the bank of a river, across a meadow. The Scriptures, especially the Old Testament, is very partial to this word. For example:

*He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. The path of righteousness is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Thou wilt show me the path of life. In Thy presence is fullness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.*

When Jesus said to the twelve on that memorable night of the betrayal, *I will go before you and the way*, it is very unlikely that He had in mind one of the great Roman roads that Caesar had constructed. He was not

thinking of business traffic or commerce or trade. Because the age was not a commercial age: it was a pastoral age. The people were simple fishermen and shepherds. He was using a metaphor implying fellowship and comradeship and close personal intimacy.

The men to whom Jesus spoke on this night were troubled; they were bewildered, they were dazed. They felt as if they were in the depths of a thick forest with no star to guide them. He had just told them He was about to leave them; He was going on a journey alone; He was going away but He was coming back again to take them home to Himself. Then doubting Thomas spoke up and said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how can we know the way?" To which the Master replied: "Thomas, I am the way to the Father." He did not say, "I can point you the way." He said, "I am the way." That is to say, "If you walk with me and trust me and love me, you will come to the Father."

This makes clear to us what the Christian life is. It is a walk with Christ, along His way. Sometimes we say of a traveler, "You are on the wrong road, my friend; you have lost your way." Well, that is what every sinner has done. He is in a far country and has lost his way. Christian, the pilgrim in Bunyan's immortal tale, ran across many trails, some of them very alluring; and every time he was tempted to try one he got himself into a mess. There is only one sure way to the Father. It is Christ's way. And so the first line of the hymn very appropriately is, "O Master, let me walk with Thee."

Now let us see what, in the judgment of the author, walking with Christ really means; what is its secret, to use his own word?

The key, first of all, is a key of service. "In lowly paths of service free." Nowhere is this idea so beautifully manifest as in our Lord's own life. His whole life was a life of lowly service. "He went about doing good," is Peter's way of putting it. And this is all the more remarkable when we remember that He lived in an age when slavery was rampant. A person's standing was judged by the number of slaves that ministered to his comfort. It was the privilege of greatness

to be served. It was the glory of the opulent to be waited on.

Today that valuation is completely reversed. No one commands respect today because of his satellites. No one commands respect save as he ministers in some real sense to the welfare of others. All royal regalia is being scrapped. Coronets and diadems and robes of state are going gradually to the dust-heap, and the towel and the basin are taking the place of jewels and ornaments and needlework in the wardrobe of the great and mighty. When Father Damien went out to live among the lepers, he had learned the secret. When Grenfell went to Labrador, he had learned the secret. When Mary Slessor went down to Calabar, she had learned the secret.

How fitting is that word "lowly!" "I am meek and lowly in heart," Jesus said. And it is an interesting fact that the Master in the days of His flesh never referred to great sacrifices. It is the cup of cold water, and the two mites, and the Good Samaritan's two pence that He immortalized. He never labored to do anything great or brilliant Himself. His life consisted of numberless lowly things. There are those who think nothing worthy of notice unless it is spectacular and flashy. Jesus did not think so. He taught that no deed of service, if it is done with the right spirit, is insignificant; rather, it is momentous.

In the *Life of John Stuart Mill* we are told that when a young man, he was a great walker. He used to go on long walks along the country roads and he would fill his pockets with violet seeds, scattering them along the hedges as he went. That was more than one hundred years ago, and I have heard it said that today, if you were to pass along these English highways, you would find some purple blossoms growing there because John Stuart Mill had passed that way. It is a great thing to scatter seeds by the wayside that will shoot up when we are under the sod. The chief end of man is to glorify God by going about doing good.

Then there is the key of Soul-winning! That is the burden of the second stanza of this hymn. Would it not be a wonderful thing if we all mastered the secret of soul-winning? Not only of winning souls

but guiding them and watching over them. We are not only to stay, that is, to stop the wayward feet, we are to guide them in the homeward way.

One of Ian Maclaren's books entitled *The Cure of Souls*, makes use of an old Latin phrase and means the care of souls, and I like the word "care" much better, for care implies curing. Someone has noted that there has been too much curing and too little caring in the church, meaning not that there has been too much saving but that there has been too little helping and encouraging and strengthening and keeping. Von Hugel once said, "Christianity taught us to care, and that is the great thing." But as Dr. Samuel Shoemaker has reminded us, "There just isn't much brotherhood in some churches, and it is one of the lacks which people coming in feel most."

*Help me the slow of heart to move  
By some clear, winning word of love;  
Teach me the wayward feet to stay  
And guide them in the homeward way.*

Should we not all be in this business? Is it going out of fashion, I wonder? I fear it is. Every good man carries about with him a blessed contagion. It should flow out upon others as a healing gift. Soul-winning is a winsome thing. It is to touch life to its finest issues. It is the greatest achievement of human life.

Then there is the key of Patience:

*Teach me Thy patience; still with Thee  
In closer, dearer company;  
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong  
In trust that triumphs over wrong.*

How patient the Master was! How patient He was with the twelve. He never scolded them. He never lost heart. Sometimes, they were very dull and slow, but He never was reproachful. Patience is a wonderful virtue. It is not the weak, anemic, bloodless thing that we so often suppose. It is a strong, masculine, virile grace. David Livingstone has told us that there is something terrible in the patience of a lion. Patience is more than endurance. It is possible to endure and still not be patient. Endurance says, "Lord, increase my staying powers." Patience, - "Lord, increase my faith."

Have you ever known a patient sufferer, calm, cheerful, never fretting, always thinking of the comfort of others

and yet, at times, undergoing excruciating pain? "I wish I could return just once more to my pulpit," said Dr. Culross, a preacher of another day. "If I could my sermon would be on patience."

How much we need this choice and quieting grace! There is great impatience in the world today. Common tasks are irksome. We are all in such a desperate rush! How we need patience in the realm of prayer. We try to hurry God. We run on ahead like excited children trying to quicken His steps that seem to us so slow. How many parents have prayed for their loved ones and been well-nigh broken hearted by delay. We must not lose heart at God's delays. Speed, after all is only a relative matter. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years." "God is patient," says Augustine, "because He is eternal."

"Still with Thee in closer, dearer company," the third stanza reads. And "still" is not an adverb, it is an adjective. It does not have the meaning of "yet" with Thee, but "quiet" with Thee. As the Psalmist says, "Be still and know that I am God."

The final key is Hope.

*In hope that sends a shining ray  
Far down the future's broadening  
way.*

Hope always sends a cheering ray. It is the province of hope to cheer. Have you ever stood behind a great searchlight and seen it shoot its gleam far into the darkness, its path ever widening as it reaches out? Coleridge has a very remarkable poem on "Despair," and yet it begins with what someone has called "the most perfect picture of hope in the English language." Strange to find such lines as these in a poem on despair:

*All Nature seems at work. Slugs have  
their lair,  
The bees are stirring - birds are on the  
wing -  
And winter, slumbering in the open air,  
Wears on his smiling face a dream of  
spring.*

The poet is picturing the last of March or early April. Spring is in the air. All Nature is beginning to stir, and winter is compared to an old man lying out in the open, asleep, but on his face is a smile because he is dreaming of spring

That is *Hope!*

One of the glorious things about Christianity is the place it gives to Hope. Hope is the keynote of the gospel. The Bible takes us into the valley but it never leaves us there. It is a living hope. All other hopes are dead or dying. This hope is triumphant. There is patience in the Buddhist creed, but there is no hope. Every true Buddhist is a hopeless, melancholy fatalist. "Hope is for the living," said Theocritus. He meant that those who have lost hope are numbered among the dead. Our Lord never distinguished this world from the next. To Him there is only one world and it is eternal. Our life here is only a beginning. It is the first chapter of a story that is to be continued and amplified. The way gets bigger, and broader, and better. We carry on what we here began. The goal of our journey is God, Himself.

He is the home of the soul. To arrive safely at our eternal home is peace.

*In peace that only Thou canst give  
With Thee, O Master, let me live.*

The glad hopefulness of the closing lines of this hymn was thoroughly characteristic of Dr. Gladden. In one of his last sermons before his death in 1918, he said this, "I have never doubted that the kingdom I have always prayed for is coming, that the gospel I have always preached is true. I believe that democracy is getting a new heart and a new new spirit, that the nation is being saved."

As you and I serve the Christ Who is the Way, and as we are busy about soul-winning and soul-caring, and if all this is done with patience, then, we too, can have this Hope and know that we are truly walking with the Master in His way.

## O Little Town Of Bethlehem

WALTER A. KUNTZLEMAN

*Text: Luke 2:15 - . . . let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.*

**M**ANY lovely stories cluster about the original Christmas City. There is the field where the gentle Ruth from the land of Moab, gleaned with the reapers. Here she met Boaz. The story of Ruth with all its love and loyalty is not surpassed in all the world's literature.

On its nearby hills, David, the shepherd lad, played his harp and dreamed his dreams as he watched the sheep. By the village gate, he oft quenched his thirst with water from the deep, cool well. No wonder then, that in later years when exiled from home, he exclaimed, "O, that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate."

Within its confines, Rachael, the beloved wife of Jacob, died as she gave birth to Benjamin. Outside the village on one of the gentle slopes, under "the

oak of Weeping," Jacob buried Rachael and set up a pillar upon her grave.

During the days of Isaiah, in an obscure village, a simple countryman named Micah, prophesied of things to come. The days were dark, but he saw a Deliverer; "Thou, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of Thee shall One come forth unto me that is to be a ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from old, from everlasting."

For these and others like them, Bethlehem is sacred and dear to many. But aside from all these, Bethlehem holds a potent charm for millions because here, earth touched heaven. Here the sky was rent by a choir of angels. Here was held the first Christmas service. Here was proclaimed, "Peace on earth to men of good will." Bethlehem is the Eternal Christmas City, for here Christ was born.

Thousands of people will go to this city to revisit its shrines, to relive its glories. Today we will visit it in spirit

as we call upon one of the beautiful Christmas Carols to speed us on our way.

*O little town of Bethlehem  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,  
The silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.*

### THE PLACE

The Christmas City was not headlined in newspapers and magazines. There was no hill-to-hill bridge with its tree extraordinary, no miles and miles of colored lights and evergreened lamp posts. No bumper-to-bumper lines of cars with excited and smiling faces looking at the sights.

Bethlehem was a quiet place, a place where people went on their ways quietly, working, eating, living. Just another city on the map.

God so often reveals Himself in the small, quiet places of the earth. He makes the weak and unknown confound the wise and mighty. Even wisemen came to Jerusalem looking for Him, for who else would think of a little place like Bethlehem?

It is strange how God and human history take obscure villages and places and make them famous. Today we are too often blinded by size. We talk in terms of superlatives as though the future of the Kingdom depended upon geographical area or economical stature.

During an important session of one of the American church bodies, a resolution was advanced to relocate the headquarters of the church from the largest city to a place one twentieth its size. Some of the speeches which followed gave the impression that some leaders actually believe that the glory of God and His ever-helping Spirit is only to be found where a few million people are jammed together in some large city. It is well for us to reflect upon the sobering truth, that Place doesn't make a people great, but people make a place great.

*For Christ is born of Mary;  
And gathered all above,  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep*

*Their watch of wondering love.  
O morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy Birth!  
And praises sing to God our King,  
And peace to men on earth.*

### THE PLAN

God planned a miracle. In the gospels of Matthew and Luke, we have the sublime story of how God came into the world. He came in such a way that makes all nations celebrate it to the end of time. Not all men accept God's plan. They, seemingly know more than the gospel writers who wrote under inspiration from God, Himself, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son whose name shall be called Jesus for He shall save His people from sin." Here is God's plan to redeem a world lost in sin. Here is the very touchstone of our whole faith. Here is a great fact. Here is one of Christianity's greatest facts, and Christianity depends upon its great facts. Time and again, we have seen a discounting or denial of this fact of the virgin birth of our Lord lead the church into indifference, coldness and passionless unbelief.

In the Virgin Birth of Christ, we have one of the great miracles of the Christian faith, but not more so than God, Himself, not more so than the soul of man, not more so than the Holy Spirit, the Atonement and the Resurrection. Today, we rejoice and sing because God's plans are higher and greater than ours and beyond our understanding. God doesn't ask us to understand His plans, only to accept them in faith.

*How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The Blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him  
still,  
The dear Christ enters in.*

### TUE PEOPLE

Phillips Brooks caught the spirit of the Angel message, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people for unto you is born this day a Saviour." Here is the news, the good news for people, for all people. The

blessings of God's heaven are imparted to human hearts. The blessings recognize no iron curtain, no bamboo curtain, nor any other curtain which separates men into colors, creeds, or camps.

God's blessings are imparted very quietly and God puts in His appearance where least expected. In this world of sin, He stands at the door and knocks, and where people, any people, open the door, He comes in to sup and dwell with them.

Christ is knocking at the doors of homes and hearts across the boundaries of the world, but the sounds of revelry and carousing are vocal many places so the knocking goes unheard and unrecognized.

It was time to lunch. The family was seated and Jenny prayed, "Come, Lord Jesus, now be Thou our guest and let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen." The knocker on the door sounded and Jenny sprang to open it. An elderly man entered. She brought him to the table and gave him a place. Her father gave him a warm coat and he left. The family looked silently at the place where he had been sitting. Then Jenny said, "That was just like the prayer I said, 'Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest!' He really came." "What's that?" asked Dad, coming out of his reverie, "my little girl, I think you have something there." "You think?" exclaimed the mother, "there is no doubt about it at all. Didn't Jesus say, 'I was hungry and you gave me food. I was cold and you clothed me' or words to that effect? And when they asked Him, 'When will we see you and help you?' He answered, 'Whatever you did to the least of these, you did it to me.'"

So Christ comes in many ways to many doors and seeks entrance. The only homes and hearts He enters not are the ones which open not to Him.

*O, Holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in,  
Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord, Immanuel.*

When Christ really occupies our lives, then Christmas has come in all its full-

ness. Jesus told the statesman and leader, "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Most of us will not be able to travel to Bethlehem of Judea. It isn't altogether necessary. No special dispensation will be given by Christ for traveling to any shrine, but all of us have a Bethlehem, a spiritual Bethlehem inside of us. Bethlehem stands for a new birth, a heavenly birth. When we open the doors of our hearts to receive Christ, we begin again. Our lives become Bethlehems. Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea. Now He must be born in our Bethlehem. You see, God in Christ is not far off. There is a Bethlehem in us, a Bethlehem of the soul. Somewhere, this truth was captured in never-to-be-forgotten words:

*It isn't far to Bethlehem town,  
Its anywhere that Christ comes down  
And finds in people's friendly face  
A welcome and abiding place.  
The road to Bethlehem runs right  
through  
The homes of folks like me and you.*

The strains of this beautiful carol will be ringing in every corner of the world. Its melody will be heard in countless stores where Christmas decorations glisten and sparkle and where Santa Claus has been living. Its words will be sung in vaulted cathedrals and humble chapels by choirs and congregations.

Under its spell, troubled hearts will rejoice, tense faces will relax and lagging feet will speed onward.

It brings back memories of a night long ago when God came down to earth and made the dark hours radiant with His glory.

Best of all, it helps to prepare our spirits for the coming of the Christ Child and so we pray:

*O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Immanuel.*

#### OUR NEED

*We do not need more national development; we need more spiritual development. We do not need more intellectual power; we need more spiritual power. We do not need more law; we need more religion. We do not need more of the things that are seen; we need more of the things that are unseen. Calvin Coolidge*

# In Our Darkness

A Funeral Meditation

KARL H. A. REST

*Text: 1 Kings 8:12 - The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.*

**W**HAT a strange word this text is! When we first encountered it -- whether we read it in the Bible for ourselves or heard it read from the pulpit -- it puzzled us; it runs counter to our normal expectation. We think of God as the Light of light, dwelling in a light to which no man can approach. Yet here it is proclaimed that the God of Light is determined to dwell in darkness, in thick darkness.

If we stick to this puzzling statement long enough to comprehend its meaning, we shall find in it a source of comfort and a tower of strength. And we discover that its meaning is not exhausted by the historic situation which first called it forth; it is a promise of God which is fulfilled in many situations of life.

How well it fits the occasion for which we are gathered here. In this memorial service we pay our last tribute of love and devotion to one who has left our midst and we turn our hearts unto God for that grace which is needful for us in this hour.

During the last years of his life, the mind of our friend was not always clear; there were times when he did not even recognize friends. It seemed as though a deep fog had settled upon him; he was walking in the dark.

There is one thing which gives us comfort as we think of that dark season through which he passed; we know he did not walk alone. We lay hold of the promise of God: "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness."

What a marvellous assurance it is to know that even though our friends cannot reach us, we are not left alone: God is with us. He reaches us. He understands us, better than we can understand ourselves; even when we cannot understand ourselves we are not cut off from Him. Our text is a symbol of the understanding heart of God. He stands by us in the time of our greatest need, for "the Lord said

that he would dwell in the thick darkness."

The promise of God is a source of comfort and a tower of strength in our grief. When Death makes his presence felt in our home or circle of friends, we sometimes speak of this sorrow as a "dark hour" or a dark chapter" in our lives, and so it is.

When grief strikes us suddenly, seems as though our world had come to an end. Dreams are shattered. Plans are cancelled. Our courage leaves us and with it our fondest hopes also vanish. Held firmly in the grip of deep sorrow our outlook upon life becomes bleak and desolate. Our outlook . . . ? As we repeat the words, they seem empty and sound utterly strange. For we really have no outlook; everything is black -- darkness has overtaken us and we are alone.

True enough, friends rush in when disaster overtakes us. They speak their words of comfort, tell us of their heartfelt grief, or take us by the hand and without saying a word, they sit in sympathetic silence beside us. These expressions of sympathy do help and we appreciate them. Yet there are regions in the depth of our being which are altogether untouched by them; there we are alone. And this loneliness is desolate; it is black as night, with not even a ray of light to relieve the thick darkness.

Blessed are we, if in such an hour we can take hold of this promise of God by faith; for we realize then, we are not alone. And that counts more than anything else; it is all that really matters. Though even our best friends cannot reach us in our hour of desolation, there is One who can penetrate the darkness which enshrouds us. "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness." He comes to us in our deepest sorrow and lives with us in our "thick darkness." By His coming, He drives away the desolate loneliness of our heart and in that companionship, the burden of our sorrow is relieved.

The promise may also be applied to the world in which we live. It was indeed a dark world into which God came through His Son, Christ Jesus. Graphically it is portrayed in the Christmas carol, "Little Town of Bethlehem." There we come upon the beautiful and heart-warming lines, telling us how a dark spot was



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*Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The Everlasting Light.*

The world has not been the same again since the Son of God came into it. He brought with Him new hope and new life -- everlasting life. He brought life and immortality to light. He is Himself, the incarnation of life; the life which cannot be shattered by death and the grave for it persists beyond them. The words He once uttered are always precious to faith but they are doubly meaningful to us in the crisis of sorrow and grief. "I am the resurrection and the life," said Jesus, "he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

The Lord does come and dwell with us in darkness; in the thick darkness which threatens to undermine our existence. But as He comes and dwells with us, our darkness is relieved; and when we rise up again to follow after Him, we experience the miracle of His grace: the darkness is turned to light. He has come to us in our darkness to lead us into the light. "He who follows me," He says, "will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Having re-established contact with Him, as He comes to meet us in our darkness, shall we not respond to Him and say: "Lead on, O King Eternal?"



## The Priority of GOD

H. Richard Rasmusson

*Text: Matt. 22:36.*

**W**HEN a lawyer once asked Jesus, "What is the great commandment in the law?" He answered; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all the heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

These words take a clear issue with a trend in our society, namely, to separate religion and ethics. Some people -- even people who profess Christianity -- are saying, "Let's be brotherly, but why believe in God?" Others say, "Let's prac-

tice righteousness and kindness, but religion only confuses and divides us, let's leave it alone." Those people would separate the second commandment from the first.

In John Galsworthy's novel, *Maid Waiting*, Dinny, talking about religion with her mother says, "Providence is too remote, Mother . . . I suppose there is an eternal plan, but we are like gnats for the care it has for us." Here mother says "Don't encourage such feelings . . . they affect one's character." "I don't see the connection between beliefs and one's character," says Dinny. "I'm not going to behave worse because I cease to believe in Providence or in an after life. If I'm decent it's because decency's the thing and not because I'm going to get anything for it." Then Dinny's mother says: "Yes, but why is decency the decent thing if there is no God?" So!

This sermon contends that it is un-Christian and un-Biblical to separate religion and ethics. Our subject, "The priority of God" develops the thesis that religion is basic to ethics, God is prior to our righteousness, that the second commandment is dependent on the first. What God has joined together let no man put asunder.

Consider first that the position of historical Christianity has been to keep them together. But there is a trend in the churches to separate them. In what Theodore Wedel has called the "Christianity of Main Street," moral values and ideals and their practice is rooted in nothing deeper than man and his aspirations for these things. How these values and moral concerns ever got here in the first place, never seems to bother such people.

Classical historical Christianity, insists that faith in God, religious faith is crucial, not as an end in itself, but as expressing the nature of the universe and becomes the soil that alone can produce and nurture and sustain love and altruism and belief in man, his dignity and freedom etc. Humanist Christianity, as Wedel points out, lives under the tragic illusion resembling a technological civilization which turns its energies to perfecting light switches, but neglects the generation in its power plants.

For classical Christians, God is not a cosmic nuisance but the Crown of ever-

thing valuable and meaningful in our strange existence. "We love God," as the Bible says, "because He first loved us." Without God as love, we would not love. God is prior and first. "In the beginning, God."

As Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote:

*The spirit ever witnessing in ours  
And love, the soul of soul, within the soul,  
Evolving it sublimely. First, God's love.*

Consider secondly, that the priority of God brings under judgment the purely utilitarian interest that many have in Christianity. It is disturbing to find many in our culture today whose only interest in Christianity is as a bulwark and support for democracy or free enterprise or peace of mind or preservation of the home. Now these things I am for, too, rightly understood. But Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Believing in the priority of God, the main concern of the individual in his confrontation with God, must be to get right with God. It means the abandonment of the soul to the love and service of God, instead of harnessing the power of God to the service of our ideals. Too much of our Christianity is pseudo-Christianity, a using God and religion for what we want. Finding that prayer brings peace of mind, we pray — it pays. Finding that love is good business we encourage all our employees to practice love — it pays. Religion, some have found, adds to their chances of success.

Now, these things are not wrong to want — but we must be clear on their order. If these things are added out of service to God — well and good. But we must not be religious because these are its fruits; we must seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. We love God because it is His command. The true Christian puts God first, blessings or no blessings, peace of mind or no peace of mind. Anything less than this is the prostitution of the Christian faith: not what I can get — but what I can give should be our spirit.

Consider thirdly, that the priority of God gives a transcendent dimension to our life and we are saved from futility and meaninglessness. This is the meaning of Paul's words: "If in this life only we had hope in Christ, we are of all

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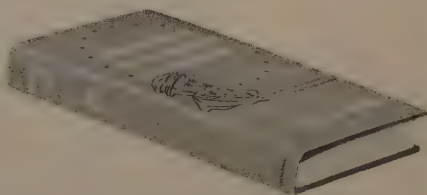
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men most miserable." But this life is not all. For the Christian history is fulfilled beyond history. As God is transcendent to this perishing world, so is the child who lives in Him.

I am repulsed by the other-worldliness of some of the sect-types of religions. To forget that we have an existence here, and a work to do here, is to emasculate a part of the Gospel. We must not forget that there has always been a strain of other worldliness in the Gospel. We are in one sense strangers and pilgrims here and our true home is elsewhere: but it is no warrant for taking this life as unimportant; God has a purpose for us here, too. Life doesn't make complete sense if only limited to the plane of history here. The Biblical faith contemplates a history beyond history. As Christians we live life in the awareness of a transcendent goal and purpose.

But we also work to prevent atomic war, for economic justice, racial brotherhood, family protection, education for our children. Yet we do not grasp at these things with the greed and hysteria and panic that many do. Having no hope beyond this life, we become anxious, terrified, afraid and panicky. Rooted, however, in another dimension of existence, we have the peace of God in us, even in the middle of this "time of trouble."

We let Paul sum it up: "I have become absolutely convinced that neither Death nor Life, neither messenger of heaven nor monarch of earth, neither what happens today nor what happens tomorrow, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord."

T. S. Eliot has written:

*You, have you built well, have you forgotten the cornerstone?*

*Talking of right relations of men, but not of relations of men to God.*

*Our citizenship is in Heaven.*

Yes, but that is the model and type for your citizenship upon earth.



*Why grumble because the roses have thorns? Lets be thankful that the thorns have roses.*

# ILLUSTRATIONS

## A CHRISTIAN, BUT NOT OF THE SPIRIT

*Text: Luke 9:51-56 - Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

I was waiting for a trolley when a nice-looking young man asked me about the trolley schedules. Something in his manner and accent attracted my attention more deeply than his question, and I asked, "Are you from Greece?" "No," he said, "I am a Syrian from Jerusalem."

For a moment I looked at him while the sublime suggestions of that holy name swept over my mind. Here I was face to face with one who was born and reared where

*Walked those blessed feet*

near two-thousand years ago. How real was Jesus to him? While a yearning for an answer was in my heart and mind, the young man stood nearby. I said, "Things are going to be better in Jerusalem now that the Turks have been driven out, aren't they?" "No," he replied, "things will be worse. The country is being given over to the Jews. I would like to go back there and kill a lot of them." "Why," I asked, "do you hate the Jews?" "The Jews killed Jesus," was his reply.

"What is your religion?" I asked him. He replied that he was a Christian of the Orthodox Greek Church. Then my trolley came and I boarded it. But how I have wished that I had had a little more time with that bright, winsome young man, to tell him what Jesus actually came to this earth for, lived for and died for. He like thousands of Christian church members, had no inkling of what Christianity really is, what Christ really means to mankind. Too many of us are taught dogma instead of love, forgiveness, hope. Jesus never wished the death of any man; He even forgave those who crucified Him, saying, "they know not what they do."

*Ballantine's "Young Man from Jerusalem."*



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### THINK BEFORE YOU THANK

*Text: Luke 17:15-18 Where are the nine?  
One of them, when he saw that he  
was healed turned back, and with  
a loud voice glorified God.*

We must think before we can thank! One of the ten, made clean through the grace and love of Jesus, saw that he was clean, turned back to give voice to his gratitude. What of the other nine?

With few exceptions, we are now buying or making Christmas gifts. We are careful to remove the price tags, before wrapping and presenting them to loved ones. Why? Is it that we are unwilling to have our loved ones know the cost, or effort required, or perchance the small price paid for a gift in return for what can never be fully paid? No it is our desire to have the gift represent our genuine gratitude to loved ones without any thought of the cost or effort. We give because we feel the need of expressing our gratitude.

During an interview at Leland Stanford University, Herbert Hoover was questioned regarding the acceptance of

salaries by government officials. He said, "I felt that I owed to my country a debt that was unpayable and I had no right to ask her to pay me. . ."

Calvary is the unpayable gift of Jesus Christ to us. Calvary is accepted by many, as any other gift, without much if any thought of the Giver, and in time is forgotten. How often are we aware of the cost-mark of our glorious inheritance in Christ? So many of us accept His gift and forget our unpayable obligations.

Paul Rader

### MEN NEED SAVING

*Text: Mark 2:17 - I came not to call the  
righteous, but sinners to repent-  
ance.*

*Luke 5:31 - They that are whole  
need not a physician; but they  
that are sick.*

A house burned down in Albany some time ago. A father and son went to the basement dining-room to drag out a large piece of furniture. It became wedged in the doorway and they couldn't budge it another inch. The father was pulling



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and so he was outside in the hall, but the son was pushing and he was penned up in the basement entrance. The flames broke through and smoke filled the place. The frantic father threw himself against the obstruction, but vainly, and realizing the peril to his son, he ran to the basement window and with the strength of a superman, tore the iron bars from their fastenings and pulled his son out of the very jaws of death.

We must know and understand the peril of sin in our own lives, the lives of loved ones, our neighbors. We must understand that it takes courage, will power and determination to face the peril of sin and through God's Grace, break the bars. This is the only way open to a new life in Jesus Christ.

*W. E. Biederwolf*

## DIVINE GUIDANCE

*Text: Psa. 107:7 - And he led them forth by the right way . . .*

Once, when travelling in the Himalayas, I set out for the village of Rampur. I came upon a place where two roads branch out. Not sure which was the road to Rampur, I took one of them and after walking a long distance I realized I had chosen the wrong way. If I wanted to return I would have to walk back eleven miles. Distressed at the mistake, I went into the neighboring village of Nalthora. A local shop-keeper beckoned to me. When I went to him he hid the Hindu New Testament he had in his hand, thinking I was a Hindu Sannyasi. After conversing

a while, he said, to me, "What do you think of Jesus Christ?" "He is my Savior," I said. "Do not be troubled," he continued joyfully, "at having lost your way and come here. For some time I have been studying these Gospels. I have many doubts and difficulties. I have been praying that the Lord would send someone who could teach me. He has brought you here in answer to my prayer." We continued late into the night talking about Christ, and I spent the next day with him. His doubts were cleared away and he believed in Christ. Later he was baptized. In this way God guides us when we entrust ourselves to Him. We may think we have lost our way, but He will take us to places where we are needed in His work.

*R. L.*

## THE CANDLE OF THE LORD

*Text: Proverbs 20:27 - The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.*

The radiantly vigorous personality is, after all, the outgrowth of a great soul. Among the great souls of our heritage, standing out like a mountain in the clear, cool air of the morning, tower teachers, preachers, community leaders, leaders in industry, great fathers and great mothers, doctors, nurses. A Japanese student at Harvard, after hearing Phillips Brooks speak one Sunday morning, wrote, "Phillips Brooks! What struggling souls does he support and strengthen! What a depth under his surplice! What a broadness behind his prayers! After a draught of his faith and hope, a wayfarer marches

for a week or two with songs upon  
s lips, the rough earth with all its  
ountains and valleys levelled before  
m." A Candle of the Lord! How many  
us seek to attain this goal?

## PAYING INVESTMENT

*Text: Matt. 6:6 - But thou, when thou  
prayest, enter into thine inner  
chamber . . . pray to thy Father  
who is in secret, and thy Father  
who seeth in secret shall recom-  
pense thee.*

The challenge of missions lies in the  
opportunity for an investment with the  
argest possible returns. Investments  
ave a dwindling return these days, and  
e principle is increasingly insecure. A  
usiness man recently said: "I used to  
e able to invest my surplus funds at  
en percent, but now, if we can find  
omething secure in which to invest at  
wo percent, we think it is wonderful."  
nother said: "I am going to get my  
oney out of my business just as quick-  
y as I can and invest it all in God's  
ork. It will be His responsibility then."  
Indeed, these are the days, when, as  
ever before, the words of our Lord  
ould be repeated often: "Lay up for  
ourselves treasures in heaven, where  
either moth nor rust doth corrupt and  
here thieves do not break through and  
teal.

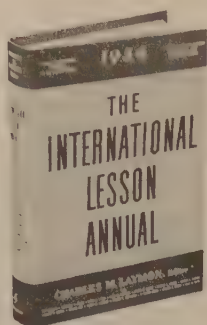
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THOU DIDST SAY UNTO ME, Gertrude V. Brox. Judson. 66pp. \$1.00.

This little booklet is composed of pages from the devotional diary of Gertrude Brox, who served as a missionary of the American Baptist Church in India. Miss Brox, after serving her church in the mid-west, was sent to the Bengal-Orissa Mission in 1951. Her ministry to the people of India was cut short by her sudden death in June 1954.

These pages reveal her spiritual pilgrimage of doubt, questioning and near rebellion to

acceptance of God's will and joy in that acceptance. She bares her soul to her reader as she did to her Lord, and lets those who will struggle with her as she hears God answer.

The reading is a little difficult, for she uses the Elizabethan style in her writing. But the reward is well worth the effort. We are indebted to the Woman's American Baptist Mission Society and its secretary, Ada P. Stearson, who collected and edited the booklet.

A W. Kirk Allen, Jr.

LIFE LOOKS UP, Charles B. Templeton. Harper & Bros. 192pp. \$2.50.

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ARCHY, Annabelle M. Melville. Scribners.  
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John Carroll of Baltimore was the first  
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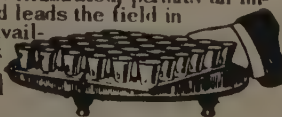
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tion. James Cardinal Gibbons, here quote said, "The dominant idea in the mind of Bishop Carroll, who was as great a statesman as he was a churchman, an idea that has remained the inspiration of the Church and has directed all her policy of the last century . . . was absolute loyalty to the letter and spirit of the Constitution of the United States." This tribute may raise some questions, but for John Carroll I believe was true. It should be added that except where the detail becomes too dense, the book is not only informative but enjoyable reading.

Paul H. Ro

BEYOND DESPAIR, G. Ray Jordan, Macmillan Co., 166 pp. \$2.50.

This volume aims to help the reader develop spiritual resources by accepting power from God which will take men Beyond Despair so that they can face any situation with confidence and strength.

It begins with "When Religion Becomes Real," and others like "When Hope Becomes Daring," "There is Power for You," "True God: He Will Reign Forever" are among chapters which follow. The heart of truth in each is well illustrated from life and literature.

Ideas are suggested which bring fresh thought so that the maestro's leading may bring harmony from the various and confusing sounds which make up an individual today. The secret is spiritual unity with God. The final emphasis is that the God who is Creator, Lawgiver, Judge, is also our heavenly Father, so "no one stands alone."

Claude Richm

THE PARABLES OF JESUS, Joachim Jeremias. SCM Press, London.

This is the English translation of a book published in 1947 and revised in 1952. It was written by an eminent New Testament scholar from Gottingen, Germany. The book is an extremely significant contribution to New Testament scholarship. Julicher in 1891 showed that the allegorical method of interpretation of the parables was far from adequate. C.H. Dodd, in 1938, demonstrated the fruitful interpretation that can come from viewing the parables in the historic setting. Dodd, however, was concerned with just part of the parables and his treatment of these was influenced by his "realized eschatology." Jeremias attempted to recover the original meaning of the parables by discovering the actual situation in the life of Jesus which called them forth. He believes that the parables "were predominantly concerned with a situation of conflict." His interpretations, if seriously studied, should enrich the understanding of Jesus, Himself, and should enhance sermons on the parables.

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### The TWENTY THIRD PSALM

W.A.Kuntzleman.

O, Thou Christ of God, Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, we rejoice today at the remembrance of all Thy mercies which exceed all that we can hope or think. Thou hast drawn back the mantle of night and wakened us to the blessedness of a new day. As we feel the peculiar need of being kept safely and securely, how thrilling it is for us to know and feel:

*Response-* Thou, Lord, art our Shepherd. Thou art our Shepherd indeed.

As the needs of the day mount and present us the ever recurring problems of "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed? How shall we live?" how wonderful to be able to confess:

*Response-* We shall not want for Thou makest us to lie down in green pastures. Thou dost lead us beside still waters.

Burdened with the weight of our sinfulness, our wandering souls cry out with the saints of old. Cast us not away from Thy presence, restore unto us the joy of Thy salvation, then from our prostrate forms how unspeakable the joy to say with confidence:

*Response-* Thou, Lord, restoreth our souls. Thou restoreth our souls indeed.

The pathways of the world divide before us bringing much confusion. We seek for guidance betimes, in the hills then on the plains. We open the books of philosophy and science, we sit before teachers of eminence and stature. There are guides at every turn offering us a way. What joy then to find out that:

*Response-* Thou, Lord, dost lead us in the right paths for Thy name sake.

When we are in the midst of life we are in the presence of death. Like a pall it covers us with gloom and robs us of happiness. Amidst our tears the words of truth begin to gleam:

*Response-* Yea, though we walk through the Valley of the Shadow of death, we will fear no evil for Thou art with us.

Though tears be our lot night and day with loved ones far away, how glorious it is to know:

*Response-* Thy rod and Thy staff they

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comfort us. They comfort us indeed.

When the woes of life o'ertake us, calamities we can't understand, distresses and evils which we do not seek, enemies over whom we cannot win, there is blessed assurance in:

*Response-* Thou preparest a table before us in the presence of our enemies. Thou dost anoint our heads with oil, our cup runneth over.

How privileged we are indeed! How favored are we to be the guests of such a Host! In Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may our trust be forever.

*Response:* Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen and Amen.

### PEACE OF MIND

(From page 369)

this veneer of religion has been spread over rigorous conformity to the standards and customs of this world. We often yield to the temptation to make respectability the standard of righteousness, and it is not always easy to distinguish a Christian from any decent-minded unbeliever. We pay lip-service to Jesus while we follow Him from afar.

To realize how far, how very distant we are from Jesus' way of life, we have only to refresh our minds by reading thoughtfully the record of His doings. He was a man of religion, utterly engrossed in God, Who became more real to Him than His own disciples. His dominant desire was to please His Father and follow God's guidance. As much as Jesus longed to live, as passionately as He desired to escape the cross of crucifixion, even more compelling was His determination to do what was right in God's sight. He called His disciples to this same devotion, this same eagerness to do God's will, in the face of any risk and at whatever cost. He warned against the temptation to put love of parent or child above commitment to the will of God, and insisted that nothing short of total allegiance was adequate. He promised His followers His own joy, the exultation that comes from right relationship with God and man, in spite of persecution, and pain, and threat of imminent death.

Kirby Page

# November 1955

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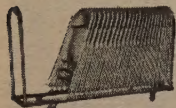


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